

Message Text

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USNATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1836

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EEC, EI

SUBJECT: IRISH CONDUCT OF THE EC PRESIDENCY

SUMMARY. DURING RECENT TALKS WITH FONOFF CONTACTS, WE HAVE TRIED TO EXPLORE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE IRISH SIX-MONTH TERM AS EC PRESIDENT, INCLUDING THEIR THINKING ON US-EC CONSULTATIONS. THE GOI IS AWARE OF THE BURDEN THAT WILL BE THRUST ON IT AND IS TRYING TO "BEEF UP" ITS THIN FONOFF STAFF. IN GENERAL, THE IRISH APPEAR WILLING TO BE HELPFUL BUT UNSURE OF WHAT THEY SHOULD DO AND SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN ON PRECEDENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY: FONMIN FITZGERALD HAS THE PERSONAL ABILITY AND THE WILL TO BE AN EFFECTIVE EC PRESIDENT DURING THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. FONOFF CONTACTS DO NOT THINK HE WILL RUN THE
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OFFICE OUT OF HIS OWN HIP POCKET AS HE HAS BEEN PRONE TO DO IN

THE PAST. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN OBVIOUS STAFFING PROBLEM. HE HAS ORDERED A MINIATURE "WRISTON PROGRAM" INVOLVING 13 NEW SENIOR PEOPLE PLUS AN INCREASE AT THE BOTTOM OF ABOUT 30 NEW FSO'S. THIS MAY HELP TO CURE ONE CHRONIC PROBLEM WE HAVE HAD WITH THE SMALL FONOFF: WHEN AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY IS OUT-OF-TOWN, THERE IS OFTEN NO ONE ELSE TO DEAL WITH. COLLEAGUES IN EC EMBASSIES HERE HAVE SHARED OUR CONCERN ABOUT UNAVAILABILITY OF KNOWLEDGABLE OFFICERS.

2. SEVERAL CONTACTS HAVE NOTED THAT THE SYSTEM OF REVOLVING PRESIDENCY HAS INSTILLED A NEED IN THE INCUMBENT TO "PUT HIS STAMP" ON THE CONDUCT OF THE PRESIDENCY DURING HIS SIX-MONTH TENURE. THEY ASSUME THAT FITZGERALD WILL WANT TO DO THE SAME, AND ONE OF HIS GOALS WILL BE TO STRENGTHEN EC INSTITUTIONS AT THE EXPENSE OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTIES. ONE SENIOR OFFICER ALSO NOTED HUMOROUSLY THAT "AT LEAST WE CAN PROVE WE CAN HOLD MEETINGS." THE IRISH BELIEVE THAT THE MAJOR ISSUES NOW ON THE HORIZON FOR THE NEXT HALF-YEAR ARE THE CAP, UK "RE-NEGOTIATION," AND THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE.

3. US-EC CONSULTATIONS: THE IRISH HAVE TOLD US THEY INTEND TO BE "PRAGMATIC" ON CONSULTATIONS WITH US. BY THIS, THEY APPEAR TO MEAN: THAT THEY HOPE TO AVOID DISPUTES; THAT THEY HAVE DROPPED THEOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS TO US/EC CONSULTATION; AND THAT THEY ARE STILL FEELING THEIR WAY ALONG. THIS LAST POINT GIVES US SOME CONCERN. IT HAS OFTEN SEEMED TO US THAT IRISH WERE TOO UNSURE OF THEMSELVES TO PROVIDE THE SAME FRANK BRIEFINGS AS MOST OTHER EC MEMBERS. THIS HAD MADE IT A TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS TO GET INFORMATION.

4. WHILE IRISH SAY THEY NO LONGER HAVE "RESERVATIONS" ABOUT PROPRIETY OF US/EC CONSULTATIONS, THEY DO STILL HAVE TWO "CONCERNS":

A. FIRST IS SYMMETRY." IF EC TELLS US ABOUT ITS INTERNAL DEBATES, WILL WE BE ABLE TO TELL THEM ABOUT US POSITIONS IN SOME COMPARABLE FORMATIVE STAGE?

B. IRISH ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT FACT THAT THEY ARE ONLY EC MEMBER WHO IS NOT ALSO A MEMBER OF NATO. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT ITALIANS (AS NEXT EC PRESIDENT) WILL REPRESENT IRISH WHENVER THEY LACK REPRESENTATION OF THEIR OWN, BUT THEY DO NOT SEEM FULL COGNIZANT OF ANY ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITALIANS TO HANDLE NATO AFFAIRS

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ON BEHALF OF EC PRESIDENCY. NOEL DORR, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, TOLD US THAT HE IS NOT WORRIED ABOUT PURELY ECONOMIC AFFAIRS (WHICH WILL OBVIOUSLY BE DISCUSSED WITH EC) OR

ABOUT MILITARY MATTERS (WHICH WILL OBVIOUSLY BE DISCUSSED IN NATO.) HE DID THINK, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WOULD BE A GREY AREA OF POLITICAL AND POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS. HE THOUGH US MIGHT TEND TO RAISE SUCH SUBJECTS IN NATO WITHOUT GIVING CONSIDERATION TO

IRISH POSITION.

5. OUR CONTACTS DO NOT SEEM AWARE ON ANY US/EC CONSULTATIONS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED WITH THE FRENCH IN WASHINGTON. WE HAVE NOT GIVEN IRISH ANY HINTS ON THIS SCORE, BUT DEPT MAY WISH TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE.

6. WE HAVE PICKED UP THE FEELING THAT THE IRISH AND PERHAPS OTHER EC MEMBERS WOULD HOPE THAT THE US WOULD CARRY ON A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE PRESIDENCY AND THROUGH THE PRESIDENCY TO THE OTHER EIGHT. THE FEELING SEEMS TO BE THAT TO BY-PASS SMALL IRELAND IN FAVOR OF SOME OTHER CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM WITH THE MAJOR EC STATES WOULD BE TO DIMINISH THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NINE.

7. FOLLOWING WOULD APPEAR TO BE MAJOR FONOFF CONTACTS DURING IRISH PRESIDENCY:

A. FONMIN FITZGERALD--EXTREMELY COMPETENT AND FRANK. EAGER TO TALK TO US BUT ALMOST CONSTANTLY IN ORBIT AND DIFFICULT TO REACH.

B. PERMANENT SECRETARY PAUL KEATING--WELL-INFORMED ON MOST SUBJECTS. GENERALLY SOUND JUDGMENT.

C. DEPUTY SECRETARY SEAN KENNAN (A NEW TITLE). HIS ONLY EXCLUSIVE FIELD WILL BE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE, TO WHICH HE HAS JUST BEEN ASSIGNED. (COMMENT: THIS SEEMS TO SHOW THAT IRISH ATTACH HIGH PRIORITY TO SUBJECT.) HE MAY, HOWEVER, BE ABLE TO DISCUSS VARIETY OF OTHER SUBJECTS WHEN ASSISTANT SECRETARIES ARE NOT AVAILABLE.

D. EAMON GALLAGHER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS--COMPETENT AND UNUSUALLY FRANK. KNOWS A GREAT DEAL ABOUT POLITICAL AFFAIRS, WHICH HE MAY DISCUSS INFORMALLY IF ASKED.
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E. NOEL DORR ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND IRISH "POLITICAL DIRECTOR." YOUNG AND NEW IN HIS JOB. WILLING TO BE HELPFUL BUT NOT SURE OF WHAT HE SHOULD SAY TO US. WHEN HE IS NOT AVAILABLE, HIS DEPUTY, JOHN CAMPBELL, IS ALSO WORTH TRYING.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD BE GLAD TO HAVE GUIDANCE FROM DEPT AND ANY COMMENTS FROM OTHER ADDRESSEE POSTS. WE HAVE SCHEDULED ANOTHER SESSION ON THIS SUBJECT WITH IRISH ON DECEMBER 27.
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